

POLITICAL LECTURES

— (No. I.) —

ON THE
MORAL TENDENCY
OF A SYSTEM OF
SPIES AND INFORMERS,
AND THE
CONDUCT TO BE OBSERVED
BY THE
FRIENDS OF LIBERTY
DURING THE CONTINUANCE OF SUCH A
SYSTEM.

By J. THELWALL. *K*

Every Ministring Spy
That will accuse and swear is Lord of you,
Of me, of all, our Fortunes and our Lives.

BEN JONSON'S SEJANUS.

L O N D O N:

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LONDON: PRINTED BY J. JOHNSON, ST. PAUL'S CHURCH-YARD, 1781.

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THE AUTHOR'S ADDRESS, AND THE PLACE OF SALE, ARE IN THE CITY OF LONDON.

NEW-YORK:

INTRODUCTORY NARRATIVE.

LECTURES upon political or miscellaneous topics are so much a novelty to the town, and the attempts which have been made to prevent their delivery, as well as the public countenance they have met with, have been so flattering, that though the size of the present pamphlet will scarcely justify the formality of a preface, I have thought it necessary to introduce it with a few observations on the circumstances which induced me to adopt the present plan of public amusement and instruction. This I believe I cannot commence in a more proper manner than by a brief history of an event which took place about sixteen months ago, but which has never to this hour been fairly and impartially stated: I mean the suppression (or *undermining*) of the Society for free Debate, just at the time of issuing the famous Proclamation of Nov. 1792.

Of this Society I was one of the acting members, that is to say, one of those who were accountable for the rent and disbursements, who received the profits, and who took upon themselves the responsibility for the questions brought forward. The Society had, at different places, been in existence for near half a century; and during that time, though a variety of political topics, both of a temporary and general nature, had been discussed with the utmost freedom, the legality of its meetings had never been called in question, nor (except in an individual instance, during the discussion of the *Regency Bill*, when the Lord Mayor for the time being sent his marshalman to suspend the question, and which suspension the audience rejected with becoming indignation) had the least interruption to the debates been attempted by the civil magistrates, till about the close of the season which terminated in April 1792; when the dancing master, from whom we hired the use of Coach-Makers Hall, after repeated indications of terror and alarm, informed us, that, on account of the threats which had been directed against him by certain persons in authority, he could not venture to renew his agreement with us, unless we would covenant not to bring forward any questions of a political nature. As the committee were not much inclined to be dictated to by a dancing master in the selection of their questions, and as for my own part I had formerly withdrawn from the society on account of
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the frivolous subjects with which it had disgraced itself, and had only rejoined it upon an implied condition that *none but* political questions should be debated, we instantly rejected the disgraceful conditions, and withdrew to the King's Arms in Cornhill, where the debates of the ensuing season were held. At the commencement of that season I was not indeed present, being on an excursion in Kent, for the restoration of my health, and having, during that excursion, occasioned a public meeting to be called, and a debate to take place in Canterbury, a few days before the entrance of Mr. Pitt into that city; and upon which occasion the decision of four or five to one "that, in the "then situation of France, a *Republican government* ought to be "preferred to a limited monarchy," gave such serious alarm to the aristocrats, that I am told whole troops of soldiers were poured into the place as soon as I had turned my back upon it; and dreadful denunciations of vengeance were thundered against me by the assembled corporation *as soon as I was known to be out of their power*. When I returned to London, however, I found the public mind was all awake. The fate of *the great criminal of France* was in agitation, and, together with the barbarous manifesto of the Duke of Brunswick, furnished eternal topics of conversation and debate; and the discussions of the society in which I resumed my place, partook of all the animation which from the state of politics was to be expected. In the midst of all this animation, however, I appeal to the frequenters of those debates, whether the utmost good order was not generally observed, and whether, though expressions of popular disapprobation were sometimes called forth by the illiberal violence and personal abuse of the Aristocratic party (for it is curious that this party constantly so loud in their *charges of violence*, should always be the foremost to *praise* it,) whether the utmost impartiality was not conspicuous in the conduct of the chairman, and usual speakers of the society. The abilities and the decisions, it is true, were almost uniformly on the democratic side, and the doom of the institution was therefore sealed; threats and denunciations, in the names of persons in authority, were spread abroad against it; and private intimations were conveyed to me of the consultations held upon the subject. Affairs were in this posture when, on the discussion of the last question, "Whether the neutrality of the maritime powers of "Europe was to be attributed to their approbation of the "French Revolution, or their dread of introducing similar "consequences among themselves?" an individual, too much in the habit of disturbing public societies, surrounded with a clamorous party of associates, tried the patience of the audience to such a degree with a torrent of scurrility and personal abuse (such as calling us, and particularly myself, by name, *Jacobins*, *agitators*, *assassins*, *traitors*, and *villains*) that, in spite of all the efforts of the chairman and the committee to protect him, an attempt was made to turn him out. A scuffle and considerable confusion ensued; so that no further discussion could take

take place upon that evening, and the question was accordingly adjourned. I mention this circumstance, because some have attributed to this *accidental*, or *premeditated* riot, for I do not pretend to determine which it was, the subsequent suppression of the society: the fact, however, is, that the scheme had been long in agitation; and as it took place just at the same time that the proclamation of alarm was published, it appears as though it were a member of the general plan—one of the *ways and means* for exciting terror and apprehension throughout the country, disappointing the hopes of parliamentary reform, and hurrying the affrighted people into a war with France. Be this as it will, meetings and City councils were assembled, and the wise heads of the corporation were laid together to concert our immediate dispersion; and as these cabals were not unknown to me, and as I was conscious of the legality of the meeting, and resolute in the pursuit of my object, I went on the ensuing Thursday evening with a strong expectation of being obliged to contend against the magistracy of London for the right of political discussion, in such a manner as to bring the question to an issue in a court of justice. Sir James Saunderson, however, had taken his measures more craftily; he had sent for the dancing master of whom we hired this room, had tampered either with his fears or his venality, and induced him to stick up a bill in the forenoon, declaring the society adjourned till further notice, and to refuse admittance to us and our company, upon condition that, the meeting being thus disappointed, a guard of constables should be granted to preserve him and his premises from popular indignation. It is curious to observe that notwithstanding the underhanded manner in which this adventure was achieved, Sir James had the address to procure himself to be thanked by the Common Council, as if he had suppressed the Debating Society by his open authority: though nothing could be further from the truth: and so confident was I that he had no such authority to exert, that I strained every nerve of diligence and invention to procure another room in the city where the debates might be continued: conscious that the liberty of speech, and of the press, are the vital organs of *all that is valuable in our Constitution*; and without the exercise of which Freedom can in no country in the world, especially in a mixed monarchy, maintain its ground against the encroachments of power and prerogative. My attempts were however fruitless; and though I offered, at several places, to the amount even of *Twenty Guineas for a single Night*, yet some had been threatened with the loss of their licences, others that their houses should be pulled down, and all refused. The next expedient was to assert in as public a manner as possible the right of political investigation, and to shew the public that this right had never *openly* been called in question by persons in authority; and it was with this view, more than from any hope of obtaining a room, that I caused the following advertisement

to be printed on a large posting-bill, and ordered it to be stuck up about the metropolis.

" VINDICATION of the LIBERTY of SPEECH.

" Whereas an illegal and oppressive combination of divers persons, yet unknown, has taken place, to annihilate the great palladium of the British constitution, the liberty of speech: And whereas, by means of this illegal and oppressive combination, the owners of certain rooms have been over-awed or seduced, by some secret means, to refuse the letting of their rooms to persons intending to exercise the constitutional right of free debate:—this is to give notice, that having taken the advice of several counsel learned in the laws, upon the question; and being sufficiently satisfied by them of the legality and constitutional foundation of the right of political discussion, I am resolutely determined to assert and vindicate this invaluable right of freeborn Britons, in whatever place the opportunity can be gained; and I do hereby advertise all persons having rooms within the city of London, capable of holding from two to five or six hundred persons, that (taking all legal and pecuniary responsibility upon myself) I am willing to give the sum of twenty guineas, (to be paid before entrance on the premises) for the use of any such room for one night, upon application to me,

JOHN THELWALL.

"No. 6, Weston-street, Southwark."

The men, however, who undertook to post this advertisement, were treated with so much insult and personal violence, by persons evidently set to watch the streets for such occasions, that they were obliged to desist and bring the bills back again to me, after very few of them had been distributed. In the mean time I had written to Sir James Saunderson the following letter, and caused it to be delivered at the Mansion-house.

" To Sir James Saunderson, Knt. Lord Mayor of the City of London.

" Sir,

*" I take the liberty of writing to you upon a subject which, as it must necessarily become the theme of public investigation, ought certainly to be properly understood: and I have delayed my enquiries till my mind has become cool under the impression of the injury and insult I have received, in or-
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der that I might address you with the calmness due to your official character, in how equivocal a light soever your personal conduct may, in this respect, appear.

" I am one of the members of the committee by which a society (sanctioned, in every respect, by the letter and spirit of the British constitution, and established in its rights by long continued usage) is conducted; and who, at the beginning of this season, agreed with Mr. Bourke, upon the payment of certain legal and valuable considerations, for the use of his room in Cornhill, one night in the week, for the purposes of that society, during the winter.

" This being the case, I considered that, by the laws of this land, I was joint tenant of the room so hired, for the weekly night agreed upon; and that every tenement being, in the language of our boasted constitution, the CASTLE of its tenants or occupiers, those tenants must have an undoubted constitutional right to free, peaceable ingress and regress to and from that castle, together with such lawful persons as they shall choose to introduce or invite. What, then, was my surprise, when going, on Monday last, to meet the company whom, in concert with my colleagues, I had lawfully invited to the room we had so hired, I found the doors of our castle closed against us, and guarded by a mob of constables, armed with the staff of that very man's authority who, a few years ago, as Chairman of the Quintuple Alliance, signed many of the boldest resolutions which that association adopted, and by his frequent attendance and strenuous support, gave his sanction to publications much more likely to be offensive to persons in the respective branches of the Government, than any thing that ever came from the society he was thus endeavouring illegally to suppress.

" But I am unwilling, notwithstanding the fallacious representations in the resolutions of the Common Council, to bring an accusation against any gentleman till I am thoroughly acquainted with the foundation upon which it stands; and I should be much more happy in an opportunity to defend, than a necessity to reprobate, the conduct of one who once pretended, at least, to be the friend of Liberty. I expect, therefore, if not in candour to us, at least, in justice to yourself, that you will explain to me, and to the society, the circumstances of this affair, that we may know how much of this violation of public and private rights is attributable to the

Chief

Chief Magistrate of the City of London, and how much to the
timidity of Mr. Bourke.

" I am, Sir,
" An Englishman by birth and spirit,
" No. 6, Weston-street, JOHN THELWALL.
" Southwark, 1st Dec. 1792."

To this letter, of course, I received no answer. And as from the first I had been deserted by all my associates; who had by this time been, one by one, to the great man at the Mansion-house, and made their peace, I found myself incompetent to encounter, single-handed, all the expence and trouble of the further prosecution of the question for the present. However, still penetrated with the importance of the right so jesuitically invaded, I determined to seize the first opportunity of reviving the exercise of that right, and of vindicating the insulted claims of Reason.

In the course of that winter another Debating Society was opened, at the Globe tavern, in Fleet-street, by some young students of the law, who, by a *dishonourable compromise*, relative to the questions that should be brought forward, and the *sentiments that should be permitted to be delivered*, (they called it, however, a Society for free and impartial debate) obtained *permission* from the Lord Mayor to open their mouths for other purposes than those of eating. To this society I went three or four times, and as often disdained the servile shackles with which this base compromise endeavoured to restrain the faculties of Britons. Every time I was opposed, and personally abused by the timid members of this *professional committee*; and every time I was supported by the sense and spirit of the people; who, notwithstanding the timidity and alarm which appeared to be so generally diffused, still loved the man who would venture to tell them bold truths, and would not suffer him to be insulted.

From this time the question of the right of political discussion appeared to sleep, till about the beginning of November last, when a question concerning the love of life, the love of liberty, and the love of the fair sex being agitated at Capel-court, I went, for the first time, to that society, and delivered the speech, for publishing an extract from which (the story of King Chantecleer) Citizen

tizen Eaton was confined three months in Newgate; being unable to find bail to the enormous sum of two thousand pounds; and which was, after all, by the good sense of an independent jury, found to be *no libel*.

Shortly after the delivery of this speech, being then on the committee of the London Corresponding Society, and it being necessary to provide for the support of our delegates; I offered for the twofold purpose of instruction and encreasing the requisite subscriptions, to give a course of political lectures every Wednesday and Friday, admitting the members (who are mostly men in a humble situation of life) at a low price, leaving it open, at the same time, to strangers, and appropriating the whole receipts to the support of the said delegation. This plan was accordingly pursued for two or three months, and with such success that, without any advertisement, or public intimation whatever, sixty or seventy persons of both sexes, frequently assembled together and honoured the lectures with the most flattering applause.

This had not gone on long, before I received intimation that a trap was laid to ensnare me: that in the room adjoining that in which I delivered my lecture, a party of Mr. Reeves's associators, and their fit companions, the Bow-street runners, were to be concealed; from whence, like so many cats upon the poor harmless mouse of a lecturer, they were to bounce forth on the first expression, which they, in their omnipotent wisdom, should deem seditious, and drag him in merciless indignation to Newgate. Some of my *friends* endeavoured to persuade me not to go at all; some advised me to take Blackstone's commentaries for my lecture; and some to read a chapter from the *bible*: nay some learned authorities endeavoured to persuade me that it was high treason to attempt to instruct his majesty's liege subjects, and that I should certainly be hanged. My own mind, however, was presently made up; and I composed for that evening, and delivered in the presence of some of Mr. Reeves's *honourable* associators, who were in reality present, the lecture "On the moral tendency of a system of Spies and Informers," which, with some additions and alterations, is here presented to the public.

The success of this experiment induced me to wish for a proper place where the lectures could be more publicly delivered; and being informed that I might have the use of the long room at the Three Kings in the Minories, I immediately bargained with the landlord, and billed the town with my advertisements. The *worthy* successor of the *worthy* Sir James Saunderson, who had promised "to walk in his steps, to fear God, and honour the king," was immediately alarmed; marshalsmen and constables were dispatched all over the metropolis to tear down the bills, and an embassy was sent to the Three Kings to forbid the meeting; the landlord was, however, persuaded, when the time arrived, to stick to his agreement, for that night only; and notwithstanding the pains that had been taken to prevent the

the meeting, the lecture was attended by near two hundred people, and was received with unbounded applause.

As, in the mean time, I had been offered the use of the room at the Park Tavern, in the Borough, either for the purposes of **POLITICAL DEBATE OR LECTURES**, I posted the town with another bill, announcing a debate on the following question for the ensuing Monday—"Which was to be considered as more destructive in its principles and conduct, the present, or the American War?" The alarm of our sapient magistrates was now greater than ever. The bills were pulled down as fast as they were put up: and violent threats were denounced, which were carefully conveyed to me on Sunday morning, that if I dared to hold the meeting, I should most assuredly be taken into custody: to this I replied by sending advertisements to the papers to supply the loss of my posting bills. The landlord was next threatened with the loss of his licence; but with as little effect. A numerous company assembled: and among the rest a banditti of about twenty profligate and disorderly wretches (officers of the police) from Union Hall, together with a reverend magistrate wrapped and muffled up in his great coat to direct their operations. In the face of these I took the chair; avowed myself to be the sole responsible cause of calling the meeting, gave a narrative of the circumstances contained in the former part of this introduction, and called the attention of the company to the question. Upon this the *captain* of the *banditti* (I do not mean the *magistrate*—He like a prudent *general* kept aloof from the affray, and dispersed his orders by his *aide de camps*) The captain of the banditti made a curious speech, of about three lines, in praise of kings, and concluded with "*wishing destruction to all the world*." The *keepers of the peace* thought this a proper signal for them to begin their part, and they accordingly with one tumultuous roar bellowed forth "God save great George our king," &c. which they regularly resumed every time that any body attempted to speak to the question: filling up the pauses with all the insult that vulgarity could devise. The indignation of the company rose at this behaviour; and the experiment might have proved a fatal one, if I had not had influence enough to keep the insulted friends of liberty in order, and prevent them from attempting to turn the rioters out. In the midst of all the turbulence and insult of this banditti I kept my *chair* and my *temper* till the usual hour of ten; when I declared the meeting and the question adjourned to such future time and place as hereafter might be found convenient; observing that the *legality* of the meeting was established beyond dispute, since the banditti of *police officers* and *cut-throats* who attended, and who had sufficiently displayed the hostility of their *wishes*, had not dared to exert even the shadow of *authority* against either the meeting or myself. The ruffians seeing the meeting thus in danger of dispersing without their having been able to produce a riot, began to proceed to personal violence; attempted

attempted to overturn the elevation upon which my desk and chair were placed ; and extinguished the lights. It was then that a gentleman who was present went in quest of a magistrate who was sitting all the while below ; and, asking him if he meant to sit there while murder was committed by his runners, insisted upon his interference to restrain the riotous insolence of those wretches ; to which he replied, with considerable agitation, " that he had " sent the constables up stairs" (*the very desperadoes who made the disturbance!*)—" what could he do more ?" Finding however that he had to deal with a man who was not to be trifled with, he was coming up stairs, just as I had closed the meeting, and, surrounded by my friends, who had *thrust the peace officers out of the way*, that they might *preserve the peace*, was retiring from the scene of confusion. I then demanded of the landlord a private room in which myself and my friends might regale ourselves, till the strangers had dispersed ; left by our departing all together a riot might ensue. This however the *magistrate* would not permit him to grant ; but he informed me that he would order the constables to attend me and keep the peace if I thought it necessary. To which I replied that his constables were the only riotous persons in the meeting, and that---if he suffered any of that banditti to come after me, *he must answer for the consequences*; for *I would not*. The company however took that care of the peace which the magistrate refused to take : for, blocking up the staircase in a mass, they kept the wild beasts raging in confinement in the room, till they thought we had time enough to disperse to our own homes.

Such is the conduct of the *peace officers* of the Borough ; and such the deportment of the magistrates of that paltry sinkhole of meanness and timidity !

It happened that before this the landlord of the *Three Kings* had sent requesting me to give my lecture again at his room : being in fact very well pleased with the custom it brought to his house. The lecture was accordingly delivered there again, on the Wednesday following, to a very genteel and overflowing auditory ; and was again received with very considerable applause.

On the evening of the former lecture a *council of corporation* had been held at a silversmith's in the neighbourhood ; on the present occasion a grand consultation was called at the Mansion House, at which I am informed Sir James Saunderson attended, to assist the divan with his councils. Violent measures, I am told, were proposed ; and the whole assembly were disposed for war ; till two of them, a little more sagacious than the rest, observed that as the law was on my side, they might perhaps burn their fingers if they interfered. It was accordingly unanimously determined,—“ That the city marshal with the whole posse of “ city constables should repair at eleven o'clock to the *Three Kings*, “ and prevent the landlord from drawing any more beer and serving any more punch to such of the company as had staid to “ supper.”

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They did not, however, stop there. Licensing day was approaching, and a message was sent to the landlord, in the name of the Lord Mayor, and certain Aldermen, informing him that if he dared to permit my diabolical Jacobin lectures against Spies and Informers, and such like worthy personages, to be delivered any more in his house, his licence should infallibly be taken away. The landlord promised submission; and sent a messenger to me informing me of the circumstance; and my lecture was accordingly advertised in the public papers to be held at No. 3, New Compton Street, Soho. When lo! Lift up your voices,—O ye citizens of London; and applaud the prudent valour of your chief magistrate!—the great Paul Le Mesurier seized the opportunity when the enemy was not upon the field to display his prowess and authority. The whole train of constables and marshal men were summoned to a man, and at the head of this formidable body, after having suffered two successive meetings to be held without venturing to interfere, forth issued the high and mighty potentate to rout the company from a place where it was notorious that it would not assemble.

With what kind of feelings must every being of common sense reflect upon this mummery of would-be-thought authority?

The fact is, that the legality of political discussion cannot be controverted in this country; and time-serving magistrates, however they may bounce and bluster, know that it cannot, and therefore wish to intimidate where they cannot controul. But in this they will also be disappointed; and the time is close at hand when not only political lectures, but political debates also, will be established on a foundation which will set the mock importance of these medlers at defiance.

THE Lectures are continued ever Wednesday and Friday evening.

Tickets may be had of the Publisher of this Pamphlet; of T. SMITH, Portsmouth-street, Lincolns-Inn-Fields; SPENCE, Little Turnstile; T. HARDY, No. 9, Piccadilly; and at the Lecture Room; where also may be had, written by the same Author,

The PERIPATETIC, or Sketches of the Heart, of Nature and Society, 3 vols. Price 9s.

AN ESSAY TOWARDS A DEFINITION OF ANIMAL VITALITY; read at the Theatre of Guy's Hospital, 2s 6d.

THE LIFE OF HOWARD, 2s 6d.

And three Political Songs, Nws from Toulon, or the Men of Gotham's Expedition; Britain's Glory, or the Blessings of a Good Constitution; and a Sheepsheering Song.

POLITICAL LECTURES, &c.

CITIZENS!

THE subject of the present discourse is not perhaps one of those that promises the most ample entertainment; and if I had called you together merely to amuse you, I ought rather to have selected some of the most striking passages from "Hudibras," or "Don Quixote," or Mr. Burke's sentimental romance of "Antoinette, the falling star of chivalry; or Priests and Pensioners in the Suds, at the News of the French REVOLUTION."

But this is no season for indulging the idle fallies of imagination: the hour is full of peril and dismay; the womb of Time is labouring with great events; and now, if ever, every good citizen, every real friend to the peace, the prosperity, and above all the permanent happiness of mankind, is called upon to sound the solemn alarum that rouses the noble energies of the soul, that shakes off the sullen lethargy of indolence, and, chasing the idle phantoms of pastime and frivolity, calls up that serious, awful train of contemplation, without which it is utterly impossible that we should acquire the sedateness of character, the improvement in knowledge and true wisdom, and the advancement towards the perfection of truth and fortitude, which all of us, ere long, may have reason enough to

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with we had attained. In short, this is a season for enquiry and instruction, not for pastime and jocularity; and it is therefore that I assemble you together in this public manner, to stimulate you to enquire into the nature of your rights as Britons and as men; and to investigate the nature and causes of that unhappiness which we cannot but feel too sensibly, however ignorant we may be of the sources from whence it is derived. Penetrated with the truth of this representation, and aware of the precipice upon which we stand, and to the very verge of which the persecuting violence of an overbearing and desperate faction is endeavouring, so precipitately, to urge a half-awakened nation, I have renounced myself those pursuits of taste and literature to which, from my boyish days, I have been so fondly devoted, as to sacrifice to them the flattering prospects of affluence and worldly ambition, which a lucrative profession presented before me; and have devoted myself, whole and entire, to the service of the public; a sense of whose injuries is the only stimulus of my conduct, and whose happiness alone I look forward to, as my dearest, and my ultimate reward.

Sportive lyre! whose artless strings,
 Brush'd by young Affection's wings,
 Playful Fancy hov'ring round,
 Whisper'd oft the varied sound——
 Sportive lyre! from hence adieu:
 Nobler thoughts my soul employ:
 Nobler objects rise in view,—
 TRUTH and glorious LIBERTY.

Rous'd

Rous'd by these, my glowing soul,
 Pants a nobler height to gain;
 Pants for glory's PATRIOT goal,
 Where the daring Virtues reign;
 Pants to hear the graver muse
 Wake the loud enthusiast shell,
 Whose notes heroic pride infuse,
 And bid the soul with ardour swell.
 Noble ardour! virtuous zeal!
 Parent of each generous deed!
 Guardian of the public weal,
 For which the valiant joy to bleed!

Thoughts like these, from hence alone,
 Shall this glowing bosom own;
 Thoughts that lift the soul on high,
 To make its own eternity;
 And with Meonian rapture swell
 The chords of Fame's immortal shell.

It is, however, a fortunate circumstance in the constitution of man, that, flattering as those pursuits may at first appear which are to be considered merely as amusive, the more serious objects of mental exertion furnish, in reality, a fund of more lasting and genuine satisfaction; and that happiness is never so perfectly attained, as when, careless of the mere impressions of pleasure, we pursue, with ardour and perseverance, the path of duty, and seek for Wisdom, where, wedded with eternal Truth, she sheds her mingled radiance through the regions of the intellectual paradise. It is mind alone, the bold and active exertion of the rational faculty, that opens the living fountains of genuine and lasting happiness, and pours the continuous tide of felicity

licity through the heart of man. To trace these fountains to their sources, to shew their immediate connection with wisdom and virtue, and diffuse (as far as I have the power) their fertilizing streams through the little paddock of every man's private feelings and capacities, and thus nourish the neglected blossoms of social kindness and universal benevolence (the natural productions of a genuine system of enlightened politics) is a task, I believe, not ignoble in its nature; and which, if properly executed, will have a tendency to render you better members, not of the community only of which you constitute a part, but of the world at large, which it is your duty also to love and benefit, whatever State Hypocrites may preach to you, from selfish motives, about hostile interests, patriotism, and natural enmity.—*Natural enmity!*—natural enmity!—As if the great law of nature, the arrangements and revolutions of seasons and elements, from which the bounties of the earth proceed, and all the delights and gratifications of which our senses are susceptible, should render TWO FAMILIES OF FELLOW CREATURES, whose powers, whose capacities, and the ends and objects of whose existence are the same, the necessary and implacable enemies of each other, merely because a *fancied line upon a map*, or a *little dirty pool of troubled water* separates them from each other.—Natural enmity!—*Ye state jugglers! ye sanguinary hypocrites! ye fir-clad priests of Chaos and Devastation!* who abuse our intellects, and inflame our passions, by your unintelligible jargon! can ye
not

not perceive the absurdity of your doctrines? Is it not conspicuous that *all enmity between man and man is in itself unnatural?*—a direct violation of the great precept of Nature—“*that man should seek his own felicity by labouring for the happiness of all mankind?*”——Yes, ye do perceive it. Half stupified as ye are by the opiate drugs of *hoary-headed PRECEDENT!* and an indolent veneration for the *saws and prejudices of a BARBAROUS ANTIQUITY,* still through the fogs and mists of your *political dotage,* the half-opened eye of Pride and Ambition cannot but see *this TRUTH:*—that if there are descriptions of beings who can be considered as the natural enemies of any country, they must be those who, though bred within its bosom, have been fostered in the scorpion nest of vicious and irrational distinction; and who, nurtured with passions and sentiments inimical to the FREEDOM and true EQUALITY of man, usurp an unjustifiable dominion over it, and endeavour to destroy its liberties, and monopolize its blessings. This they cannot, one would think, but see as plainly as we do; and happy would it be for them, and for the universe, if their eyes were still further opened, and encountering, with the steady and penetrating glance of unprejudiced enquiry, the objects of their unfounded terrors, they had discovered (as, if they would calmly investigate, they certainly would discover) this additional truth, that even their own *real interests* (I mean their HAPPINESS) would be ultimately advanced by yielding to the just wishes of the *Friends of LIBERTY and MAN.* But
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this is a degree of political illumination too strong at present for their weak optics, and instead of fortifying themselves with resolution to meet the full ray of reason, they choose to turn with pretended blindness from the truth already discovered, and to expose the cowardice and imbecility of their minds, by a vain endeavour to trample out the light of political enquiry, lest the holy flame should guide mankind at large to the discovery of their real interests, and urge them, with one united effort to annihilate that most profitable of all the various branches of the nefarious trade of courts—WAR!—that *European slave-trade*!—that detestable traffic in the blood and anguish of our fellow-creatures!

But hold—Caution is the subject of my story; and it is necessary that I should, by my example, as well as my precept, endeavour to convince you of the deep sense I have of the necessity of prudence, in this age of spies and informers, treachery and cabal—"When," as Ben Johnson expresses it,

- "Laws are made to serve the placeman's will ;
- "When sleeping they can save, and, waking, kill ;
- "When Public Justice borrows all her powers
- "From private chambers ; that in fact create
- "Laws, judges, counsellors, yea prince and state."

When every coffee-house is filled with party hirelings and venal associators, the pimps and lacqueys of courtiers and court expectants;—when anonymous letters are sufficient to blast the peace and destroy the personal security of the
best

best and worthiest members of the community ;
 —when even your own house and your own
 table furnish no longer a sanctuary and an altar
 where it is safe to offer up the free incense of
 friendly communication—when the very domest-
 ic who eats your bread stands open-mouthed,
 perhaps, behind your chair, to catch and to be-
 tray the idle conversation of your unguarded
 moments ;—when every screen conceals some
 myrmidon of oppression, lurking, like a beast
 of prey, and whetting his hungry rage in sa-
 vage silence, till the unguarded moment in
 which he may rush on his devoted victim ;—
 in short, when every key-hole is an informer,
 and every cupboard ought to be searched, be-
 fore you unbosom the painful story of your
 wrongs, lest you should be brought unhappily
 within the iron fangs of—LAW I think *they*
 call it, not for what you may have uttered only,
 but for what the perjured hirelings, by whom we
 are so frequently surrounded, may think fit to
 lay, upon the slightest suggestion, to your charge.
 —Hirelings, who

“ can lie,
 “ Flatter, and swear, forswear, deprave, inform,
 “ Smile and betray ; make guilty men ; then beg
 “ The forfeit lives, to get the livings ; cut
 “ Men’s throats with whisp’rings ; sell to gaping suitors
 “ The empty smoke that flies about the palace ;
 “ Laugh when their patron laughs ; sweat when he sweats
 “ Be hot or cold with him ; change every mood,
 “ Habit and garb as often as he varies,”
 And sell their fellow-creatures and their friends,
 to buy his empty favour.

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At such a time as this, the most guarded caution is evidently necessary, both in our conduct and expressions; and that this caution on the one hand may not degenerate into tameness and inactivity, nor be frustrated, on the other, by the nets and snares of wicked and designing men, it becomes more than ever requisite, for ourselves, and for society, that we should cultivate, with tenfold diligence, every species of political and constitutional knowledge; because it is by such means alone that a fund of intelligence and copiousness of idea can be obtained, that may enable us to utter our complaints with sufficient perspicuity, without at the same time trespassing on the boundaries of legal propriety, and exposing ourselves to the malice of the harpies that are hovering aloof, ready on the first opportunity to devour us.

It will be seen by the tone and substance of this Caution, that I am far from wishing to intimidate you. If a season can be imagined, when it is peculiarly necessary to increase rather than diminish the ardour and fortitude of the human mind, it must undoubtedly be a period like the present, when **INQUISITORIAL ASSOCIATIONS** and every species of **ILLEGAL CONSPIRACY** and *Cabal*, (wrapped in the flimsy veil of *pretended* veneration for *monopolized property* and *obsolete institutions*, but revealing, through the thin disguise, the clenched hand and thirsting dagger of **POLITICAL ASSASSINATION**) are plotting the destruction of Truth and Virtue, and meditating the annihilation of our remaining liberties. At such a period,

period, I should ill deserve the attention and confidence evinced by your attendance here, should I endeavour to check your virtuous zeal in the cause of liberty, or damp the ardour with which I have the happiness to observe so many of my fellow citizens engaged in the cultivation of their minds, and in the grand enquiry into the rights and duties of mankind, which it is the business of this course of lectures to promote.

“ We that know the evil,

“ Should hunt the palace rats, or give them bane ;

“ Fright hence these worse than ravens, that devour

“ The quick, while they but prey upon the dead.”

I am conscious, Fellow Citizens, that it is by the privilege of speech alone, and the consequent communication of idea from man to man, that we are distinguished above the brute creation, and rather than relinquish the free exertions of this noble attribute, I would fly to the woods and wildernesses of Africa, live on the precarious bounties of Nature, and climb the giant tree of the forest, in quest of its wild productions. Come then from your lurking corners, ye tools of perjured treachery—ye spies, ye dark assassins, ye venal associators for the most detestable of purposes—come forth, I say, if in your dark retreats the voice of manly indignation can reach your ears—come forth. Bring all the terrors of your chains and dungeons, and all the malice of your *inquisitorial* inventions: ye shall not daunt the soul that virtue fortifies, nor prevent me from uttering the truths

truths which conscience tells me are important for man to know.—*If we have RIGHTS*—(for it seems in the present day this must be made a question)—*If we have RIGHTS*, it is necessary we should know in what those rights consist, that we may guard and protect them with the most jealous caution.—*If we have NONE*, (the popular sentiment with certain pretended admirers of our GLORIOUS Constitution) it is important that we should know that also; that we may sit ourselves down in patient resignation, and prepare to hug whatever chains our masters may at any future period, in their *most gracious mercy*, be inclined to throw upon us.—At any rate then, as we would wish to be peaceable and virtuous members of the community, it is necessary above all things that we inform our minds by diligent cultivation: that we enquire into the nature and obligations of our own existence—dive, as far as our intellects will permit, into the discoverable laws of the universe, compare the different parts of the whole system, and endeavour to discover what link in this vast chain is filled by man—what are his duties, his powers, his capacities, how far he is improvable by knowledge and exertion, and what are the proper pursuits, in which, as the result of these premises, he is bound most sedulously to engage.

These are the proper, the fundamental enquiries, in which it is the duty of human intellects to be engaged; and without some attention to these, blundering instinct may sometimes stumble upon *rectitude*—but VIRTUE!—the *rational*, the *sublime* principle of VIRTUE!—
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the sole prerogative of man, and without which he were nothing but an *upright brute*, can never, by any possible contingency, be acquired. Nor are these enquiries the most important of our *duties* only; they are also the most delightful of our *pleasures*. Employed in the pursuit of these, man feels and enjoys the noble superiority of his nature—his faculties expand, his heart dilates, his fine senses acquire a keener sensibility—he looks abroad on the universe, and every part of it expands and brightens; while a crowd of splendid wonders rush upon his imagination, to which the mental eye of Ignorance is for ever closed.—He looks in the face of his fellow creature; and he sees indeed a brother—or a part rather of his own existence; another self—He contemplates in every individual the faculties of sufferance and of enjoyment, and feels one nerve of sympathy connecting him with the whole intellectual universe, and giving him an intimate share in all the blessings which he hopes, by his exertions, to impart to the human race. PARTY *distinctions* and PARTY *cavils*—I mean the nominal distinctions of PERSONAL FACTIONS: for differences of opinion relative to fundamental principles, and objects really essential to human happiness, deserve more serious and respectful mention.—Party distinctions, and party cavils, the offspring of ignorance, prejudice and servility, vanish before his expanding intellect; and National Animosity itself appears with all its native absurdity and vice before him. Peculiarity of feature is no longer a stimulus to
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malignity and injustice, nor does peculiarity of *opinion* excite his horror: the native of Gallia and the professor of Mahometanism are regarded with the same benevolence as the man of his own sect and country; and the sooty African need lift his fettered hands no more to *remind* him that he is A MAN AND A BROTHER!—He enfolds the universe in one large embrace, and the sphere of his enjoyments being thus expanded, he finds an eternal source of rational gratification in contemplating the felicity, or labouring to mitigate the calamities of his fellow creatures.

Such are the delights of intellect, and the *free* communication of idea between man and man, and such are the beneficent effects which this freedom of communication cannot fail of ultimately producing, wherever it shall be sufficiently indulged: for selfishness and enmity are but two of the innumerable forms of error—and error itself is the consequence only of that ignorance, which nothing but the free and fearless intercourse of mind with mind can ever be expected to remove. What then must be the ignorance or the interested depravity of those beings, who, by a system of inquisitorial persecution, would annihilate this intercourse, so fraught with benignant and delightful tendencies? Are they afraid that, by bursting the narrow boundaries within which the pride of family partiality, and the egotism of national prejudice, have so long confined our affections and our benevolence, we should trample down the enclosures that secure their monopolised advantages;
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and that the soil of exclusive privilege, manured no longer by the blood of our contentions, and watered no longer with our tears, should cease to bring forth its abundance of honours, pensions and emoluments, upon which they so long have fattened, while we have starved?—Or has that piety—that deep and lively sense of RELIGION—that fervour of devotion, for which the *Courts* of Europe have so long been famous, stimulated their conduct in this particular—and are we to suppose that (fearful lest that paradise of felicity into which the unrestrained improvement of human intellect might in time convert this hitherto contentious globe, should withdraw our meditations from that better world which is promised unto him that sojourneth in sorrow and affliction) they have therefore, in kind anxiety for our future salvation, devised this method of checking our temporal improvement, and perpetuating the ignorance, the misery, and asperity of the world? Whatever be the object, the end is to us, *in this world at least*, calamitous to the last degree, as our starving manufacturers, and the widows and orphans of our countrymen slaughtered in a ridiculous crusade to restore the lost despotism of France, too well can testify. But whatever efforts spies, inquisitions, and informers, may make to deprive us of the intellectual intercourse which it is so natural for the heart of man to yearn for, let us keep the glowing prospect of its probable consequences constantly before our eyes, and endeavour to realise a picture not less estimable to reason than delightful to the imagination. For my own part,

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so barren a wilderness would this world appear, if deprived of those delights which intellectual intercourse and the free communication of idea can alone impart, that ere I would endure existence in the condition of that mute shell-fish, gasping on the shore, to which some late associations have endeavoured to reduce us, with my own right arm I would rid myself from the incumbrance, and rather sink into non-entity than remember that I *once was man*.

It is not the free communication of sentiment, then, that I wish to restrain—it is the imprudent, the unguarded, the intemperate manner of expression, into which indignation sometimes betrays the best intentioned individuals. Let us enquire into the nature of our rights, but let us enquire with deliberate firmness. Let us be anxious to learn and to discharge our *duties*, but let us remember that of those duties, violence or intemperance is by no means to be accounted one. Let us remember that as *PEACE is better than the SWORD OF SLAUGHTER*—This, also, is one of the self-evident propositions which the *sagacious* luminaries of a certain *honourable* assembly have thought fit, in their *rage for paradox*, to call in question; and who, therefore, when tranquility might have been preserved by candid negotiation, preferred the bullying haughtiness which could not but terminate in war:—But we are a *Swinish Multitude*, who can neither *participate in their motives*, nor understand their *logic*:—All that we know about it is, that *our troughs are empty*, while the *purses* of our OWNERS appear to be swelling every day

day with the price of those of our diminished herd who already have been *sold* and *butchered*.

—Let us not forget, then, that as *PEACE* is *better than the SWORD OF SLAUGHTER*, so reason is better than turbulence and invective; and that though an honest indignation may be permitted now and then to indulge itself, it ought always to be so restrained by the curb of prudence, as to be able to look Law and Justice steadily in the face, and say, Behold, I have not trespassed upon your commands.

“ We must abide our opportunity,

“ And practise what is fit as what is needful.”

There is also another—better motive than that of prudence, to prompt us to this moderation in our deportment—Benevolence!—the kind and candid feelings of the heart! without which a pure and enlightened freedom never can be enjoyed, never can be understood. Anarchy may rage where asperity of soul triumphs in all its bitterness, but where personal hatred, and the burning desire of vengeance usurp dominion over the hearts of men, genuine liberty, and the tranquil happiness which liberty ought to secure to us, never can be hoped. Reason and the pure spirit of philosophy, are essential requisites to this state of social independence, and these will teach us to consider, that every action, however hostile to the sacred cause we are pursuing, is the unhappy consequence of errors resulting from the circumstances by which the actor has been surrounded; and that consequently, instead of stir-
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ring up the gloomy passions of the soul, we ought to pity the instrument while we redress the evil. But to return to the subject of personal precaution. To guard, in all possible instances, against illegal oppression, is perhaps more than an active citizen can be assured of: but if the friends of liberty must suffer for their exertions, let them keep at least the law and constitution, if possible, upon their side; and the eyes of mankind, at last, will open to the oppression, and the nation will do them justice. Let us not advisedly, give such a triumph to our enemies, as to suffer the reasoning part of mankind to side against us. Let the peaceable diffusion of knowledge be our serious object; and truth and reason be our only weapons; for, depend upon it, that as it is the business of the friends of despotism (and such I am afraid we have among us) to create disturbances, that they may have pretences for their oppressions, it is the part of the advocates of liberty to preserve tranquility and order, that the justness of their cause may be discovered. Truth and Liberty love the light—the clear and uninterrupted light of reason—for why should they be afraid to be seen? But Falsehood and Tyranny wish for darkness and confusion: the turbulence of a rumbling chaos: because their deeds are too evil for impartial investigation.

Let me not, however, while I am thus recommending prudence, be thought an advocate, or even an apologist for a species of ingratitude which is at present but too prevalent among us. Whatever regulations we may lay
down

down for the direction of our own conduct, let us remember that with respect to others we are to judge them only on the principle of their intentions; and if a friend of liberty, transported by his zeal for the public cause, should trespass sometimes upon the boundaries of prudence, and betray himself into the power of some officious coffee-house keeper, or association spy, let us not forget, that if we have reason to believe his intentions towards the public happiness were good, we ought to love him, for his zeal and intrepidity at least, how little soever we may applaud his discretion; and, instead of meanly abandoning him in the hour of his misfortune, and joining in the cry of his accusers, we ought to console him under his sufferings, by every soothing act of friendship, and blunt as much as possible the shaft of hostile revenge. Others may be inclined to venture more than we, or may not see the danger with so keen an eye—or they may think the public cause in want of stronger exertions than we see the necessity of. Is it their *vice*, if they become the victims of these mistakes? or are *we* the proper censors that should award an increase of punishments?

Let us be just, Fellow Citizens! while we live; let us be grateful, whenever justice will permit, and let us remember that scarcely any thing has a greater tendency to decrease our reverence for *Virtue*, than blindly confounding together, in one common censure, the errors of indiscretion, and the malignity of vicious principle. There is also another reason why we should be sparing in our censures in cases

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of this description—namely, the foundation there may be to doubt whether the victims of state prosecution, which the present system of spies and informers (unparalleled in the former annals of this or any *free* country) has doomed to languish in gaols and dungeons, have all of them, in reality, been guilty even of the charges that have been exhibited against them.

“ Every ministring spy,
 “ That will accuse and swear, is lord of you,
 “ Of me, of all, our fortunes, and our lives.
 “ Our looks are called in question, and our words,
 “ How innocent soever, are made crimes ;
 “ We shall not shortly dare to tell our DREAMS,
 “ Or think, but 'twill be treason.”

With respect to our *thoughts*, indeed, the ATTORNEY-GENERAL, I am told, has admitted, upon a late occasion, that a man is at liberty (glorious liberty, indeed !) to *think* what he pleases, provided he does not communicate his thoughts to others ; (this is British, *constitutional* liberty, I suppose !) and as Swift and other *Tory* writers have upheld the same *liberal* doctrine for this century past, perhaps our wise and virtuous governors will be graciously pleased to condescend so far as to afford us the same kind of mental toleration—*so long at least as they shall be in possession of no secret by which they can learn our thoughts previous to their communication*. Something of this sort was indeed attempted, about fifteen months ago, by several members of a certain *immaculate* assembly: our looks being in reality called in question, and a seditious

tious meaning being applied even to our very smiles; so that, in the midst of our other ALARMS, with which the nation was harrassed at that period, I am informed that certain lovers of wit and pleasantry were in horrible apprehension lest it should be made CAPITAL *to laugh without permission of his* MAJESTY'S MINISTERS!!

Upon the subject of dreams, the *sapient* conquerors of venison and turtle—the *huge bellied* NESTORS to the west of Temple-Bar carried the point, as I am informed, to still more serious extremities; and a man was absolutely taken up and carried before their *worships* for the crime of *dreaming sedition*!

The case is singular enough; but it deserves attention, on account of the knotty points involved in the discussion; and I shall therefore report it at large, not doubting that the learned Judges of a future century will regard it with equal veneration, and refer to it as of equal authority with any thing contained in Blackstone, Strange, or Plowden! or even that great oracle of legal science, “Coke upon Littleton” itself.

The fact is, that much about the time when the genial warmth of ministerial patronage quickened into existence, a new race of reptiles, called FIFTY POUND MEN, (a swarm of locusts of late but too familiar to us) a certain publican, living at no great distance from Snow-hill, and keeping a house not very unlike the sign of the *Three Butts*, being suspected of having read Tom Paine without the worshipful permission of the Lord Mayor, or Court of Aldermen; one of these said FIFTY POUND MEN began to imagine that

by watching with sufficient assiduity, he might be able to seize a lucky opportunity of shewing that he was not distinguished by the beams of courtly patronage in vain, but that he was burning with the sacred thirst of atchieving something that might perpetuate his name so long as SPIES, EAVES-DROPPERS and INFORMERS should demand the love and gratitude of mankind. He accordingly took a lodging in the house of honest "*Tankard*;" and as Fate, propitious to his wishes, would have it—where should his bed-room be, but immediately adjoining to that of his suspected host. I shall not dwell particularly upon the intermediate cares and anxieties of this virtuous *moucharde*; such as the pains he took to place the head of his bed immediately against the thin partition, so that not a whisper might be lost,—the tedious hours of expectation, which, night after night, he spent in wakeful diligence; and the pains he took to drill holes through the wainscot in convenient places, so that he might be enabled to see the dark conspirators, whoever they should be, that polluted, as he doubted not, with their nocturnal visits, the privacy of this den of treason. Suffice it that we pass to the particular incident so deservedly memorable among the glorious events recorded by MR. REEVES'S ASSOCIATION.

It happened one night, that our redoubted FIFTY POUND MAN having heard, among a select little company (to the key-hole of whose room he had been applying his *loyal ear*) something dropped in conversation about FREE-

FREEDOM and **REFORM**, and being confident therefore that some dreadful plot must be forming against our happy constitution, he stole up slyly to his bed, as the company was dispersing, and began to meditate on his expected **REWARD**. Unfortunately however for his diligence, he had that day been receiving his quarterly payment (remember I do not say at the **TREASURY**); and indulging *the careless hilarity of a soul conscious of its own virtue*, had made rather more free than usual with honest Tankard's punch and porter; so that in the midst of all his pleasing meditations, he fell asleep before either the conspirators or the host came up stairs. He had not slept long, however, before he was awakened with the expected exclamations of treason and sedition. He roused himself from his bed, and put his eye to the accustomed hole—but all was dark: his ear was, however, applied with more success, and he heard distinctly uttered, "Away with him to the guillotine; take off his head at once; don't let any of those rascally aristocrates escape." This was enough—The fifty-pound man thought himself certain of preferment, and keeping the secret close till he had an opportunity of disposing of it to advantage, he slipped out in the morning, procured a warrant, and dragged the affrighted Tankard to the seat of *justice*.

Well, the grave Divan was assembled; the great armed chairs were seated, and the great bellies of the aldermen demanded the admiration of the meagre multitude:—for, you must know, that whereas in Westminster-hall the most
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conspicuous objects are frequently the large wigs that are elevated above the bench ; so, at Guildhall, the most striking features in the picture, are the big bellies that fill with so much magisterial dignity the great armed chairs.—And to deal plainly with you, I do not know why a belly as big as a tun should not be as much revered and trembled at as a wig of the dimensions of a bushel. Well, the portly bellies were assembled, over which the useless excrescences, *called* heads, just made their diminutive appearance : the culprit was put to the bar, and the charge was made ; a party of *loyal* associators was assembled to express their indignation ; and the sentence was already more than half manufactured in Mr. Reeves's mint ; when lo honest Tankard being put upon his defence, it turned out to be nothing but a dream. He had gone to sleep with the newspaper in his hand which contained the account of those wicked *fans culottes* having taught the *new French* bow to the *innocent, upright* and *unequivocating* Louis ; and his busy imagination presenting the scene before him, he had uttered in his sleep the ejaculations which caused the alarm. Luckily for Tankard he was a married man ; and, his good woman being sent for, and agreeing in her narrative with that of her husband (for she also had been awakened by the strange exclamation), and the candle burnt down into the socket, and the newspaper, which was found by the bedside, confirming the whole account, some of the great bellies were for dismissing the affair immediately. One of Mr. Reeves's associators,

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however (a young barrister, very desirous of preferment!) affirmed that there was evidently *malice propense* in the circumstances of the dream; and that as the *malice propense* in every case constituted the guilt, he could not think their worships justified in dismissing the affair so lightly; nor did he doubt but that if the books were searched with sufficient diligence, some act, or case, or opinion, would be found, especially if they looked back to the happy and ever to be regretted reigns of the Stewarts, which, by a *liberal* construction, would extend to the CRIME OF DREAMING SEDITION. The case appeared entirely new; the whole divan was in confusion; some scratched their heads and hummed "God save the King," in articulate whispers; others sunk into a brown study; and others hemm'd and ha'd, and stared in each other's faces; while the clerks, busy as so many bees, and anxious to shew their attachment to King and Constitution, tumbled over the four and twenty folios of acts of parliament, and thrice four and twenty folios more of indexes, reports, cases, and abridgements; but, wonderful to say! upon the subject of dreaming all was silent—though there seems to be no subject with which the authors of these books, judging from their soporific qualities, might be supposed to be more perfectly acquainted. In short, after spending three-fourths of the day in hunting for rules and precedents relative to seditious dreams, after twisting and straining every thing that came in their way, and taking the learned opinions of all the great law officers of the court and city, it was unanimously

most decidedly, that there being no case in point, it would not be prudent to punish the seditious dreamer for the first offence; and honest Tankard was dismissed, upon a solemn promise, that he would never dream sedition any more.

But to return from the levity of this digression, and resume the more serious tone of moral reprobation to which the subject is so well entitled.

It is one of the curses of the infernal system of these associators, that it has a direct tendency to debauch the morals of the community, and destroy every principle of honour, honesty, and truth, that ought to link man with man, and secure the happiness and advantages of the social union; and consequently to introduce every species of moral depredation—false accusation, perjury, and subornation of perjury; and, in short, every abominable vice which treachery can devise, and malignity carry into execution.

Nor let it be suspected, that this assertion is founded in prejudice, and the aversion which difference of political sentiment is but too apt to breed in the bosoms of mankind. The facts upon which it is to be supported are to be traced with too much certainty, in the records of those despotic countries in which the system has, in former periods, been established; (and *in none but despotic countries*, let it be remembered, was it ever *before* attempted to be introduced); and the circumstance itself of this depravity is to be accounted for with sufficient facility, if we are but at all acquainted with the
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principles of the human character, and the steps and gradations with which vice treads upon the heels of vice, blackening in its progress till it sinks, by imperceptible degrees, into the lowest abysses of infamy and degradation. For vice no more than virtue is the offspring of an individual effort; and it is only by progressive steps that any considerable distinction, either in one or the other, is to be produced.

The distance, however, between the SPY, or INFORMER, and the PERJURER, is not very great. The necessity of confidence in our communications and transactions with each other, and especially in that intercourse of friendship and discourse which is the source of all the comforts and improvements of the social union, is obvious even to the most ordinary intellect; and, accordingly we find, that the sacred principle resulting from this necessity is one of the first that is adopted by the rude beginnings of society; and even savages and barbarians themselves would look with horror upon the wretch who, in violation of the first law of society, should lay traps to betray his countryman or associate into unguarded conversation, with a view of repeating it to his disadvantage; or should betray in any manner whatever the sentiments he had overheard, or which had been directed to him, in the confidence of social communion. What then, in the present state of social improvement, when the moral feelings of mankind may naturally be expected to have attained a keener sensibility, and, consequently, when efforts of such greater profligacy

gacy must be requisite to suppress these feelings — what must be the depravity of that wretch, who, submitting himself to an office of which savages themselves would be ashamed, should prowl from place to place, from lurking hole to lurking hole, and from circle to circle, to overhear and betray the conversation in which the honest and unsuspecting part of his fellow-creatures may occasionally indulge their feelings; and can we wonder, when hardened to this degree of depravity, by the vicious encouragement held out by one part of society, for the ruin and destruction of another, if they should advance one step further in the path of vice and infamy, and, to gratify an inveterate malice, or encrease the wages of their iniquity, bring forward *accusations destitute of all foundation in truth*, and sacrifice on the altar of their infernal idols, all whom personal resentment or party rancour may have rendered obnoxious to their machinations. That such has been the conduct of informers in other ages and countries cannot be denied: the page of history affirms it. And that it has, in more instances than one, been the case with respect to the victims now confined in *our Bastilles*, I have, for my own part, no sort of doubt whatever. And how should it be otherwise? From an informer to a perjurer is but a single gradation; and who that had already advanced three parts of the way to the devil, would refuse to take another step to make himself more secure of the *reward*?

- I do not mean directly to charge with the crime of designedly encouraging perjury and
false

false accusation, the persons who have set on foot this detestable system—though men who are anxiously engaged in the pursuit of their own private interests or ambition, are seldom very nice in the means of their attainment—and many of them, like the SEJANUS of BEN JONSON, might not perhaps blush to whisper in the ear of a trusty confidant,

“ Tell the words

“ You brought me, th’ other day, of Silius :

“ *Add something to them.*”

But whether such instructions were ever communicated or not by Mr. Reeves and his associates, or by the treacherous and insolent SEJANUS of this country, before whose *nigh-expiring* dignity they bend their minds in such dishonourable servitude, is not the question to society. We must look to the consequences of *measures*, not to the nice shades and discriminations of progressive turpitude in the characters, of *men* : and it was their duty, as the grand movers of the infernal engine thus set to work, for the accomplishment of a purpose in itself diabolical,—(the annihilation of political truth—the restraint of the benign progress of intellectual improvement) to consider, before the experiment was adopted, what were the mischiefs to the morals and happiness of society, which were likely to be effected by its operations? Had this subject been fully and fairly considered; had all the consequences been duly reflected upon, of tearing asunder the ties and moral obligations between man and man,

violating every bond and principle of confidence, and setting *neighbour against neighbour, and friend against friend*, to way-lay and ensnare his confidence, and violate his privacy, for purposes of political treachery; I am scarcely inclined to believe, that a being so profligate could have been found (even among the governors of this degraded country) as to have been the author of so monstrous an innovation: an innovation worse than every thing which the authors of it *pretend* to dread—which introduces, wherever it is adopted, a system of ANARCHY of the most deplorable nature—an ANARCHY OF MORALS! ten thousand times more destructive—more devastating than the most absolute POLITICAL ANARCHY that ever existed:—The fact being, that *political anarchy* is no further in reality an evil, than as the *moral system* is vitiated and imperfect; while, on the other hand, if the *principles of morality* are once overthrown, nothing like political security and peace can possibly be expected in any state. But, alas! the dog-star of alarm rages in our political hemisphere; and our intellects, already impaired by the vices of luxury and dissipation, are unable to resist the infectious mania: and behold to what a deplorable state of degradation we are already subjugated;

“ We that (within these fourscore years) were born

“ Free, equal, lords of the triumphed world,

“ And knew no masters, but affections,

“ To which betraying first our liberties,

“ We since became the slaves to one man’s pride,

“ And now to many.”

I shall

I shall not at present enter into the enquiry concerning the proper deserts of those by whom a system of this description may be introduced or supported :—It would be a painful task. I am more desirous of informing than of irritating your minds : more anxious to impart the wisdom that softens to benevolence, than to inflame the passions that urge to coercion and revenge. My system of philosophy leads me to consider men, in a considerable degree at least, as the creatures of surrounding circumstances ; and consequently to attribute less of criminality or guilt to their actuating motives, than the generality of those who are mere spectators of their actions—or perhaps sufferers by them, are inclined to suppose. I am a stickler for PRINCIPLES ; not the advocate of MEN and PARTIES :—an *opposer of vice and TYRANNY* ; not the *personal enemy even of the OPPRESSORS*.—If others, judging from the warmth of my expressions, or, perhaps, from the *narrowness of their own souls*, cannot believe these professions, I pity them ; I am not angry with them : I look into my own heart, and I believe I know my motives !

Putting, therefore, the deserts of individuals entirely out of the question, I shall observe that since we have the misfortune to live in an age and country in which profligate associations have introduced such a system among us, we have the better reason for deporting ourselves with peculiar caution ; that we may baffle, if possible, those detestable machinations by which every friend of liberty and mankind is hemmed and environed round about. In the midst of our caution,
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however, let us not mistake cowardice for prudence. The fact is, if we love liberty, and would pursue it, Rashness itself is not so far removed from Prudence as are panic and timidity. Had we never fled from our post during the alarm spread by a certain proclamation; had we, with *peaceable, but steady* resolution, opposed our sentiments to the inquisitorial associations of *parish officers and sordid merchants and money jobbers*—the present calamitous war had been avoided; and the hopes of parliamentary reform had not been frustrated. We excuse ourselves, it is true, and hide our timidity, by talking about the times; and thus countenance, in some degree, the pretences of the ministerial faction, by supposing that there can be times in which the discharge of our duties to society can be improper. But all times are in reality the same, if we have the virtue to make them so.

“Times?—The men,
 “The men are not the same; ’tis we are base,
 “Poor, and degenerate from th’ exalted strain
 “Of our great fathers. Where is now the soul
 “Of godlike Cato? he, that durst be good,
 “When Cæsar durst be evil; and had power,
 “As not to live his slave, to die his master?
 “Or where the constant Brutus, that (being proof
 “Against all charms of benefits) did strike
 “So brave a blow into the monster’s heart
 “That fought unkindly to enslave his country?
 “O they are fled the light: those mighty spirits
 “Lie rak’d up with their ashes in their urns;
 “And not a spark of their eternal fire
 “Glow in a present bosom. All’s but blaze,
 “Flashes, and smoke, wherewith we labour so.

There’s

"There's nothing Roman in us; nothing good;

"Gallant or great: 'tis true, as Cordus says,

"Brave Cassius was the last of all that race."

This picture, although the resemblance is but too near, is not, however, entirely applicable to the present posture of affairs. Our race of heroes is not intirely extinct; the last of Britons is not yet mouldering in the grave. Still we have a GERRALD and a SINCLAIR, who, unawed by the persecuting hand of power, have bravely repaired to the unrelenting tribunal of Scotland, to receive—not the dubious issue of an impartial trial, but the certain severity of cruel sentence; and still we have a MARGAROT,—"a SECOND SYDNEY!" bravely suffering—(if *suffering* that can be called which is endured with such heroic cheerfulness) the accumulated ignominy of dungeons, fetters, and invective calumny; and with a patriotic firmness, that puts to shame the boasts of ancient virtue, encountering the full malignity of an UNCONSTITUTIONAL SENTENCE, which is to banish him for fourteen years, among felons and malefactors, to the distant and inhospitable shores of New Holland, for proposing, under the common name of Britain, a more intimate union between the southern and northern portions of the empire. And I hope and trust that, in so glorious a cause, there are hundreds—thousands who will step forward, whenever opportunity shall permit, and expose themselves to equal danger, in a cause of so much virtue, utility, and glory.

Yes—glorious and enlightened patriot!
whose

whose voice has ever been uplifted, whose interests have been so generously neglected, and whose personal liberty, and loved endearments of thy native home, have so cheerfully been sacrificed for that sacred cause which shall flourish by thy persecution, and triumph by thy martyrdom!—Yes—glorious patriot! there shall be found—and the tyrants of the earth shall see it and shall tremble!—there shall be found (the hour is at hand that shall verify the prediction) thousands—and tens of thousands of enlightened citizens, who, warmed to generous enthusiasm by thy virtues, and emulous of thy distinguished, thy unfulfilled fame, shall avow to the very teeth of thy oppressors, the incontrovertible truths—the generous and magnanimous principles, which have pulled down upon thy undaunted head the hatred and the inflexible vengeance of an insolent, treacherous, and unprincipled faction—a faction, once the pretended advocates of those very doctrines which they now denounce and persecute with such unblushing impudence,—such sanguinary and insatiate fury! The voice of general indignation already begins to articulate, in tones indeed “*not loud, but deep* ;”—tones that express the internal agitation of the soul, and are prophetic of the audible murmur that must soon awaken the attention of those who at present pretend to regard our reasonings, and our remonstrances with contempt.—FALSE ALARMS, and INQUISITORIAL ASSOCIATIONS, may appal awhile a wondering and deluded nation: but, “O BRAVE BRITAIN! there is life in’t yet!”

"yet!"—the spirit of a people so enlightened, and *once* so full of the generous pride of liberty, as the inhabitants of this country, cannot be long suppressed; the genuine voice of the nation must soon be heard—I need not tell you within the walls of what assembly it is NOT to be expected to resound.—The real voice of the nation must soon be heard; and the promoters of UNCONSTITUTIONAL OPPRESSION must tremble at the shout. Then shall thy manly virtue, illustrious Margarot! meet with the applause it merits, and thy return to this insulted country shall be as glorious to thyself, and as triumphant to thy friends (I mean the friends of Liberty—for they can be no friends to that sacred cause who are not friends to thee!) as thy departure is in reality disgraceful to those *short-sighted* enemies who now exult in thy persecution.

CITIZENS!

This is not the rant of inconsiderate enthusiasm, but the result of some acquaintance with the generous feelings of the hearts of Britons; some absolute knowledge of the progress of popular sentiment,—and of the existing state of opinion among a people whom some would guide and direct (I ought to say drive and harass) without any other acquaintance with their dispositions than such as may be imparted by SPIES and EAVES DROPPERS: a set of wretches who have an interest to deceive, because their salaries depend upon keeping their employers in good humour. (Who ever pays a lackey for unwelcome tidings?)—Neither is it the cant of faction—the purchased fable of

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some venal tool of Party. I am a SANS CULOTTE!—one of those who think the happiness of millions of more consequence than the aggrandisement of any party junto! or, in other words, an advocate for the rights and happiness of those who are languishing in *want* and *nakedness*! (for this is my interpretation of a *sans culotte*:—*the thing in REALITY which Whigs PRETEND to be*!) All *factions* therefore do me the honour to hold me in equal detestation; and would be as far from trusting me, as I from being the tool of their ambition.—Neither is it the ebullition of private partiality. Between this GLORIOUS MARTYR and myself there have existed no private bonds of gratitude and attachment—no other tie or connection than that which has been created by the consciousness that both were pressing forward with disinterested zeal, in different departments, but in the same common cause of public happiness and virtue. Even a *political* intercourse has scarcely subsisted between us—my name having scarcely been enrolled in the lists of the society of whose confidence he has shewn himself so truly, and so eminently worthy, before the eventful epocha of his mission to the Convention at Edinburgh.

But the events of the last four or five months have drawn forth the exertions of the friends of liberty, and shewn the characters of men, both the MOCK *Patriots* and the REAL, in their proper colours. It is within that space of time, that my attachment for the SYDNEY OF THE BRITISH CONVENTION has blossomed, grown, and ripened. The intercourse between

us has been no other than that which the world has witnessed ; and the *private* communion, even of epistolary correspondence, has never subsisted between us—both having been too busily employed to find time for soliciting and cementing *individual attachments*. I speak of him, then, only as I have seen him *in his actions*; and I have seen his actions through no other medium of partiality than that which is natural to two men, pursuing, by correspondent means, the same important object, in which they are mutually convinced the *happiness* and *virtue* of mankind is intimately involved.

Contemplating him through this medium of his public conduct, and adding to these considerations, the *heroic cheerfulness*, the *manly serenity* of deportment, which I saw him so consistently and so unaffectedly display, I own I cannot bear the name of Margarot, or call his image to my remembrance, without feeling a glow of enthusiasm, which convinces me that there is no true patriot who really knows his worth, but who would cheerfully share with him the fate which he is going to encounter. For myself, I hope I see the path that *honor* and *virtue* have chalked out before me ; and that my mind is fortified with sufficient resolution to pursue whatever conduct the future combinations of events may dictate as most essential to the public service : but, if ever the time of despondency should come (though I confess at present I discover no symptoms of its approach) when the sinews of patriotic exertion may relax without criminality, and leave the hopeless cause

of British Liberty to the blind dominion of Chance ; rather—ten thousand times rather, would I go a voluntary, a self-willed victim to a similar transportation, and enjoy, amidst the inhospitable regions of New Holland, the society of a MARGAROT and a SKIRVING, a MUIR, a PALMER, a GERRALD, and a SINCLAIR, than remain, in the midst even of prosperity and luxury, an inhabitant of a country, which, without some strong, some marked and general expression of disapprobation and resentment, could submit to their unmerited exile.

In the mean time every individual may do something in the service of the cause for which these glorious martyrs are suffering. We have Virtue and Reason on our side ; and these, if their friends are at once *active, vigilant, and prudent*, cannot fail of ultimate triumph over the arts of falshood and corruption.

Let us speak truth, then, with boldness, and cultivate it with incessant diligence ; but let us speak with all the caution we are masters of ; that as our views are peaceable and honest, our conduct may, if possible, escape calumny and misrepresentation, and may shun the fangs of the harpies that would devour us ; and this not because we shrink from oppression and persecution (for to suffer injustice in a good cause is, in fact, a glorious distinction) but because whenever ignorance and misery are so prevalent as we now behold them in this unhappy country, the real friend of mankind has duties of an active nature calling incessantly for his benevolent exertions, which cannot be duly attended to and discharged
within

within the gloomy confines of a prison. Not that I mean to insinuate, that even in a dungeon a philosophical and enlightened patriot need be entirely useless to society. Mind! mind!—that almost omnipotent faculty of man! superior to the malice of persecution—defies the chains and dungeons of the oppressor; and while the body still languishes in confinement, makes to itself wings, and, scaling the walls and barriers that vainly endeavour to enslave it, scatters its emanations far and wide. The resources, the consolations, the functions of this divine principle, are so innumerable, that it is scarcely possible to devise a situation where life can be supported, in which, if we do not find some means to benefit mankind, and to enjoy ourselves, it must not be attributed to ourselves: to our want of fortitude, of activity, or of virtue. *Voltaire*, in the solitary dungeons of the Bastille, from which he never expected to be released, wrote his celebrated poem *the Henriade*; *Boethius*, in a confinement equally cruel, and in constant apprehension of the executioner, composed his *Consolations of Philosophy*; *Epictetus*, the philosopher, and the fabulist *Æsop*, in the condition of personal slavery, kept their minds still in freedom, and produced the immortal works, which, to the end of time, shall continue to benefit the world. In short, there is no condition, *but a state of indolence and luxurious dissipation*, that may not be rendered useful:—no situation so abject, or so hopeless, in which the *philosophical mind* may not create to itself resources: and though no man would wish to be *driven* to these
 expe-

expedients, yet, rather than stalk about in useless inanity, meet my fellow-creatures, and look them fearfully in the face, without daring to exchange with them the sentiments of my heart, I would court the chains and dungeons of my oppressors, where, to my fellow prisoners, or to my solitary walls, I could communicate my thoughts with freedom. For it is better, according to my judgment,—ten times better, to be immured oneself in a Bastille, than to have the Bastille put into one's mouth to lock up one's tongue from all intercourse and communication with one's heart.

But there is, perhaps, in the generality of instances, a guarded and cautious mode of delivery, which frequently (by expressing *no more* than what is really meant, and directing our indignation against the oppression, rather than petulantly singling forth particular individuals whom we may suspect of being the oppressors) has more desirable effect in removing the prejudices, and allaying the apprehensions, of our antagonists, than all that "sound and fury," frequently "signifying nothing;" but which is apt to lay us open to the snares of the enemy, and disappoint the important objects we have in view.

This maxim, however, I beg to be understood, as intended to restrain our passions, and correct our intemperance only, and not as curbing in any respect the free spirit of reason and inquiry, which it was ONCE the boast of the BRITISH CONSTITUTION to patronize and encourage; and, without the ample indulgence of which it is impossible that any
human

human effort should conduct us to the sublime principles of truth and virtue, from which, and from which alone, those blessings and that wisdom are to be expected, which smooth the asperities of this world of foibles and imperfections, and which may perhaps conduct us, in the end, to a height of intelligent perfection, peace, and universal love, of which hitherto (thwarted as we are in the best exercise of our capacities) we have never been enabled to form even the most distant idea. Then, perhaps, shall the party cabals, the hostile views, and national enmities which have hitherto destroyed the tranquillity, interrupted the communications, and thinned the population of the habitable globe, be removed and annihilated for ever. Glory shall alone be placed in intellect and virtue; and the only strife between man and man shall be who shall *best* deserve the love and admiration of his fellow creatures—or, in other words, who shall diffuse the blessings of his exertions through the widest circle, and be—not the *greatest* DESTROYER, but the *greatest* BENEFACTOR of the world.

Nor let us regard as visionary this glowing picture of the future advantages of cultivated intellect: for if, as no one can doubt who is at all acquainted with the history of the world and the discoveries of modern navigators, man was originally a savage, little better than the brute creation, and, if under all the disadvantages of restraints and prejudices which confined the spirit of enquiry to a few individuals, and a few objects only, he has arrived, by the mere force of

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associated intellect, to his present state of improvement and civilization ; what but cowardice and irrational bigotry can lead us to suppose that he may not still go on to further improvements and meliorations of his condition, and that a spirit of enquiry, still bolder and more unrestrained, may not be productive of effects still more visible and important to the human race.

Come then, divine and eternal principle of TRUTH and JUSTICE, animate the bosom of thy votary with the enthusiastic love of thy essence, which may prompt him, through every danger, and every intricacy, to pursue and to discover thy immutable decrees ! Guided by thy sacred light, let me seek with diligence the happiness of my fellow-creatures, and labour incessantly to disperse those mists of error and superstition, from which their vices and their miseries have hitherto proceeded—Bring with thee, O thou first and chiefest object of my adoration ! bring with thee, as thy *handmaid*, not as thy *dictator*, the guardian principle of PRUDENCE, to protect me in my researches, that ye may preside together over my future conduct, and bless me with your united favour :—but if, indeed, one of you must sometimes be dismissed, let Prudence be the victim, and, whatever be the effect to me, let TRUTH be my tutelar divinity for ever !

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